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SPECIFIC GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS: OTHER VULNERABLE GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS

Written statement*/ submitted by the Association of World Citizens, a non-governmental organization on the Roster

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[8 January 2001]

*/ This written statement is issued, unedited, as received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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Slavery and Rape of Women and Girls in Sudan

1. The Association of World Citzens submits this statement on the strength of the reports of successive UN Special Rapporteurs on Sudan, which led to the recommendation by the High Commissioner for Human Rights: "One example of a country where traditional slavery persists is the Sudan. A preventive action could be to disarm militias which abduct people for slavery." (E/CN.4/2000/12, para.59. Traditional Slavery)

2. Despite intermittent negotiations and some new initiatives during the year 2000, the armed conflict, including raiding for slaves, continues in the Sudan. The conflict has resulted in the death of an estimated two million black Africans and the displacement of over four million over the past 17 years.

3. The Government of Sudan (GOS) has used slave raids against the civilian Dinka population of northern Bahr El Ghazal as one of its counter-insurgency policies since the outbreak of the current phase of the Civil War in 1983. Other communities, such as the Nuba tribes and Dinkas of Southern Kordofan and the Nuers of western Upper Nile, are similarly affected, although less research has been done on the plight of black African slave from areas other than northern Bahr El Ghazal.

4. It is estimated that there are still over 100,000 black African chattel slaves held in bondage in northern Sudan. The overwhelming majority of these slaves are women and girls. This estimate is based mainly on evidence from the chiefs and other civic leaders of the victimized Dinka community in northern Bahr El Ghazal and non-governmental sources in northern Sudan. For example, the Civil Commissioner of Aweil West County, Simon Wol, states that his county authorities have on record the names of approximately 14,000 slaves, and that the true number of those in slavery from his county must be five or six times that number.

5. Some secondary sources cite UNICEF as estimating that there are no more than 14,000 "abducted" women and children held in northern Sudan. As no other source is cited, it must be assumed that the low UNICEF figure is based exclusively on the recorded figure from Aweil West County alone.

6. Slavery is defined in international law as a "crime against humanity". Most enslaved Sudanese women and girls are subjected to brutal, de-humanizing treatment at the hands of their captors and masters. During the forced marches to northern Sudan, they are customarily beaten, gang-raped repeatedly, and forced to carry looted property. Some of the women and girls have their throats cut or are shot to death if they cannot keep up with the slave caravan, or if they are caught trying to escape. Others die of thirst and starvation. The survivors are divided up amongst their captors. Some are kept by their captors, while others are bought and sold. Most of the slaves are held on farms and cattle camps. The women and older girls normally perform domestic or agricultural labour, without pay. Liberated female slaves report a pattern of physical and psychological torture, including corporal punishment, forced conversions to Islam, female genital mutilation, and rape. Many of the liberated women and girls bring back young children that are the result of rape. Interviews with recently freed slaves point to sexual violence, especially repeated gang-rape, as the most traumatic aspect of slavery for women and girls. This kind of sexual violence is the norm for physically mature female slaves in Sudan, and is, in some cases, a part of the experience of pre-pubescent girls.

7. Since the early 1990's, the GOS's slave raids have taken place in the context of a declared *jihad* against the black African communities that resist these policies. Most slave raids are carried out by units of the GOS's Popular Defence Forces (PDF), an officially recognized branch of Sudanese state's armed forces. In November 2000, the President of Sudan, General Omer Bashir, signalled the beginning of a new season of slave raiding when he urged 12,000 combat-ready PDF troops at a mobilization rally in the western town of Nyala to continue the "*jihad*" in Southern Sudan. (*AFP*, Khartoum, 17 November 2000) Within the first ten days of January 2001, the PDF captured 122 black African women and children during attacks on Acuro, Ajok, Wunkir, Nyinameeth and Nyinaccor in Aweil West County, according to UN officials in Khartoum. (Reuters, Khartoum, 10 January, 2001) Thus the recommendation of the High Commissioner for Human Rights concerning slavery and the disarming of militias retains all its relevance now.

8. In 1999, the GOS established a Committee for the Eradication of the Abduction of Women and Children (CEAWC). Most of the members of this committee are Arab Muslim government officials, including members of the security service. There is only one member who represents the victimized Dinka community, the Khartoum resident James Aguer, formerly of Marial Bai, Southern Sudan. According to the UN Special Rapporteur's most recent report to the General Assembly, the GOS periodically arrests and otherwise harasses Mr. Aguer. The GOS has succeeded in raising over one million euros from UNICEF, the EU and some Member States – especially Germany and Canada. Between December 1999 and May 2000, the GOS's CEAWC dispatched 155 black African women and child slaves - including children unaccompanied by parents or relatives and without guides, food or water - from the GOS-controlled town of Aweil into a dangerous, mined no-man's land. Only 22 of the 155 Dinka slaves are known to have reached their homes safely; 133 slaves remain missing and have not been traced. On 10 January 2001, the UNICEF representative in Khartoum announced that no "abducted" children had been reunited with their families for the past six months through the GOS's programme. The CEAWC has not yet published independently audited accounts of its income and expenditure.

9. The available evidence clearly shows that the practice of slave-taking, the violent transfer of slaves from one community to another and the custom of sexual violence committed against enslaved women and girls constitute crimes against humanity, within the meaning of article 7 of the Rome Statue of the International Criminal Court, adopted by the United Nations Conference of Plenipotentiaries on 17 July 1998.

10. Crimes against humanity are punishable as crimes under international law, and any person who commits an act that constitutes a crime under international law is, therefore, responsible and liable to punishment. To quote the words pronounced three years ago by Secretary-General, Kofi Annan: "There can be no global justice unless the worst of crimes – crimes against humanity – are subject to the law" (Message to the UN Diplomatic Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Establishment of an International Criminal Court, 17 July 1998)

11. The Association of World Citizens calls upon the appropriate UN bodies, Member States and the Commission on Human Rights to:

a) Condemn in the strongest terms slavery and all other related crimes against humanity committed by agents and armed forces of the Government of the Sudan;

b) Activate the existing UN mechanisms and procedures in order to bring to an end the grave violations of human rights in the Sudan including urgent measures to prevent

further cases of slavery, slave-trading in women, girls and children, and rape, especially gang-rape;

c) Implement the proposal made last year by the High Commissioner for Human Rights for "preventative action ... to disarm militias which abduct people for enslavement" in Sudan. (E/CN.4/2000/12, para. 59.);

d) Bring to justice before a war crimes tribunal those responsible for capturing and holding Sudanese slaves;

e) Support the long-standing grass-roots initiatives of Dinka and Baggara civil society to liberate slaves and return them to their homes and families in northern Bahr El Ghazal;

f) Urge UNICEF to fly freed slaves directly to the air strips nearest to their homes in Southern Sudan, using the same planes and routes that are used for the delivery of UNICEF's humanitarian aid, rather than sending them to the GOS garrison town of Aweil where their freedom and security is not guaranteed; and

g) Urge the GOS to pay reparations to former Sudanese slaves.